



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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For More Information, Contact:
Dawn Mayer or Diana Read
Division of Injury Prevention and Control
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.2493
E-mail: drmayer@nd.gov
dread@nd.gov

State Health Department Offers Toy-Safety Tips for Holiday Shoppers

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) encourage consumers to keep safety in mind when choosing toys for young children this holiday season.

Each year, the CPSC receives reports of about 15 to 20 toy-related deaths involving American children younger than 15. In addition, about 160,000 children younger than 15 are treated in hospital emergency rooms for toy-related injuries.

“It’s very important to buy age-appropriate toys for children,” said Dawn Mayer, Child Passenger Safety Program director for the North Dakota Department of Health. “The best way to know if a toy is appropriate for a child is to read the labels. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission requires toy manufacturers to meet stringent safety standards and to label certain toys that could be a hazard for younger children.”

According to Mayer, consumers should look for labels that give age recommendations and use that information as a guide. For example, some toys have labels that state “not recommended for children under three ... contains small parts” because they may pose a choking hazard to young children. In addition, toys should be developmentally appropriate to suit the skills, abilities and interests of the child.

The state health department and CPSC offer the following tips to help consumers choose appropriate toys this holiday season:

- **Children Younger Than 3**
 - Do not give young children building sets that contain small magnets. If swallowed, the magnets can cause serious injuries and death.

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600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200
Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: health@nd.gov

Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

- Children younger than 3 tend to put everything in their mouths. Avoid toys intended for older children that may have small parts that pose a choking danger.
 - Never let children of any age play with uninflated or broken balloons because of the choking danger.
 - Avoid marbles, balls and games with balls that have a diameter of 1.75 inches or less. These products pose a choking hazard to young children.
 - Children at this age pull, prod and twist toys. Look for toys that are well-made with tightly secured eyes, noses and other parts.
 - Avoid toys that have sharp edges and points.
- **Ages 3 through 5**
 - Avoid building sets with small magnets. If swallowed, the magnets can cause serious injuries and death.
 - Avoid toys that are constructed with thin, brittle plastic that might easily break into small pieces or leave jagged edges.
 - Look for household art materials, including crayons and paint sets, marked with the designation “ASTM D-4236.” This means the product has been reviewed by a toxicologist and, if necessary, labeled with cautionary information.
 - Teach older children to keep their toys away from their younger brothers and sisters.
- **Ages 6 through 12**
 - For all children, adults should check toys periodically for breakage and potential hazards. Damaged or dangerous toys should be repaired or thrown away.
 - If buying a toy gun, be sure the barrel, or the entire gun, is brightly colored so that it’s not mistaken for a real gun.
 - If you buy a bicycle, skateboard, scooter or inline skates, buy a helmet too, and make sure the child wears it.
 - Teach all children to put toys away when they're finished playing so they don't trip over them or fall on them.

Consumers should check the CPSC website at www.cpsc.gov to make sure their gift lists do not include any recalled toys or children’s products.

“This is also a season when toy boxes are cleaned out and toys are donated for redistribution to other children,” Mayer said. “Before giving away toys, be sure to inspect them for damaged or broken parts, loose eyes or exposed wires on dolls and stuffed animals and overall condition. You also should make sure they are not on the CPSC recall list.”

For more information, contact Dawn Mayer or Diana Read, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2493 or 800.472.2286.

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